

Suggestions for Local School Boards in Approaching the Development of High School Graduation and Fourth/Eighth Grade Advancement Policies: Implementing the Provisions of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9

Please note that this document is 80 pages long. If you would like a paper copy, please contact Mary Parks at 608/266-3706 or via email: mary.parks@dpi.state.wi.us.

This booklet has been prepared to assist local school boards in their decision making responsibilities for grade advancement and high school graduation policy development.

If there are more questions after reviewing the document, please contact the local CESA Standards and Assessment Center director or the following individuals at the Department of Public Instruction.

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
John T. Benson, State Superintendent

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Foreword

The citizens of Wisconsin can be justifiably proud of our public schools. On almost any measure our students do better than their peers in other states and nations. The accomplishments of our students are shared accomplishments. All of us deserve credit, as the families who nurture and encourage children, as teachers who daily demonstrate competence and commitment, and as taxpayers who sacrifice for the greater public good. Wisconsin schools are world-class schools!

We cannot, however, ignore the need to do better. Not all children have equal access to high quality schools and even our best schools can improve. A commitment to school reform and school improvement is sweeping the state and the nation. In Wisconsin, cornerstones of education reform are the model academic standards that were developed several years ago, and the assessment systems that are used to measure the extent to which students are meeting those high standards. Data from these assessments serves as an impetus for continued improvement in teaching and learning.

There is a very broad consensus around the need for high standards, for assessment systems that measure how well our students and our schools perform, and for public disclosure of the results of those assessments. There is far less consensus on how the results of the assessment systems will contribute to student grade advancement and high school graduation decisions. These issues have been the focus of intensive legislative and public debate during the past several years. Wisely, we believe, the legislature decided that the results of student assessments should be one element in comprehensive grade advancement and high school graduation policies. Further, the legislature left it to each local school board to develop policies that responded to the values and needs of the local community.

Many school board members and school administrators have asked the Department of Public Instruction to develop resource materials that local school boards can use as they develop their grade advancement and high school graduation policies. This document is provided in response to those requests. We have made a conscientious effort to provide guidance that is responsive to the requests that we have received and to the exceedingly complex issues that have been the topic of impassioned debate. We have also attempted to provide this guidance in a way that is respectful of the authority of each local school board to make the ultimate policy decisions on these issues.

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Executive Summary

Over the past five years, a shift in Wisconsin education policy has been occurring. This shift changes the way that achievement is measured and represents a growing recognition that students must acquire and be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing global community. To support this important shift, the education system places a new emphasis on academic standards and assessment and demands unprecedented levels of accountability from all segments of the community.

Two statutes expanded the accountability system to include students. One statute required students to earn a passing score on a high school graduation test as a condition for receiving a high school diploma. The other statute required students to receive a proficiency score of *basic* or above on the fourth and eighth grade knowledge and concepts examination as a condition for advancement to fifth and ninth grades. Popularly referred to as the “No Social Promotion” legislation, the real goal of this law focused on setting high expectations for grade advancement. (See Section 1 for Background.)

The grade advancement and high school graduation laws were modified in 1999 to reflect the importance of using multiple measures to make decisions about student achievement. As a result, school boards are now required to adopt written policies related to grade advancement and high school graduation that define the roles of state and local assessment. (See Section 2 for State and Local Tests.)

The board’s written policy must specify the criteria that will be used for advancing a student from fourth grade to fifth and from eighth grade to ninth. The criteria must include the test score on the knowledge and concepts examination, pupil academic performance, recommendations of teachers based on academic performance, and any other academic criteria identified by the board. The policy will be effective as of September 1, 2002. Fourth and eighth graders in the 2002-03 school year will be the first group affected by this legislation. (See Appendix for the law.)

By September 1, 2002, each school board must also adopt a written policy specifying the criteria it will use for granting a high school diploma. The criteria must include the number of credits required and other elements as identified in paragraph (a) of ss. 118.33. The other elements are pupil score on the high school graduation test, pupil academic performance, and recommendations of teachers. (See Appendix for law.)

As school boards begin grade advancement and high school graduation policy development, three tasks face them. For each policy, boards must:

- Define the criteria—“What do they mean?”
- Set the level of expectation—“How good is good enough?”
- Determine how the criteria are brought together—“How is a decision made?”

While the tasks may appear simple and straight-forward, a wide variety of questions arise from discussion related to grade advancement and high school graduation policies. The text of this document covers those questions that have been asked most frequently thus far.

- Section 1 Background to enactment of the grade advancement and high school graduation laws; what the laws require; and the significance of the policies
- Section 2 Components of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS); content covered in the WSAS; the importance of local assessments
- Section 3 Criteria that must be included in school district policies; how criteria might be defined for grade advancement policy; how criteria might be defined for high school graduation policy
- Section 4 Issues to consider; ways to bring the criteria together to create policy; and example policies to inform a district's thinking
- Section 5 What the policies mean for the school and district

Section 1—Introduction

Overview

This section provides background to the enactment of the law for grade advancement and high school graduation policies, outlines what the laws require, and discusses the importance of the policies.

A. Background

Over the past five years, a shift in Wisconsin education policy has been occurring. This shift changes the way that achievement is measured and represents a growing recognition that students must acquire and be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing global community. To support this important shift, the education system places a new emphasis on academic standards and assessment and demands unprecedented levels of accountability from all segments of the community.

Various pieces of Wisconsin law point to this new direction. Through the creation of the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards, the signing of the executive order by the governor which institutionalized them, the administration of knowledge and concepts examinations at grades four, eight, and ten, and the implementation of a statewide accountability system, Wisconsin has moved steadily toward embracing a standards-driven model for education.

Two statutes expanded the accountability system to include students. One statute required students to earn a passing score on a high school graduation test as a condition for receiving a high school diploma. The other statute required students to receive a proficiency score of *basic* or above on the fourth and eighth grade knowledge and concepts examination as a condition for advancement to fifth and ninth grades. Popularly referred to as the “No Social Promotion” legislation, the real goal of this law focused on setting high expectations for grade advancement.

While these laws emphasized the importance of student accountability, many felt that ascribing such significant weight to performance on one test that assessed proficiency on only 4 of 18 academic areas in which academic standards have been developed neglected the range of ways that students demonstrate knowledge and skills. Just as one medical test cannot give full information on the state of an individual’s health, so it is with any single achievement or academic measure. The information gained through an achievement test is one indicator and that indicator, when coupled with other academic measures and data, provides an accurate base from which to make decisions.

Consequently, the grade advancement and high school graduation laws were modified in 1999 to reflect the importance of using multiple measures to make decisions about student achievement.

This document attempts to provide guidance to districts as they develop grade advancement and high school graduation policies consistent with the new statutory requirement.

B. Requirements of the Laws

1. *What are the changes in the grade advancement and high school graduation laws?*

Wisconsin stands unique in the arena of education policy with its blend of state requirements and local flexibility. The grade advancement and high school graduation policy requirements are no exception. An in-depth comparison of previous (1997, 1998) legislation with the current legislation passed in October 1999 is provided in the appendix. The revision can be summarized as a move from the use of a single test score to the use of multiple measures within the context of local district policy.

Changes in this law do not affect the department's responsibility to procure tests that will be administered to fourth and eighth graders nor does it affect the department's charge to develop a high school graduation test. The changes in the advancement and graduation laws pertain to what the district identifies as its indicators of success and how the district uses those indicators to make decisions about student achievement and progress to fifth and ninth grades and high school graduation.

2. *What does a district have to do to meet the grade advancement policy requirement?*

A school board must adopt a written policy specifying the criteria that will be used for advancing a student from fourth grade to fifth and from eighth grade to ninth. The criteria must include the test score on the knowledge and concepts examination, pupil academic performance, recommendations of teachers based on academic performance, and any other academic criteria identified by the board. The policy will be effective as of September 1, 2002. Fourth and eighth graders in the 2002-2003 school year will be the first group affected by this legislation. (See Appendix for the law.)

3. *What does a district have to do to meet the high school graduation policy requirement?*

By September 1, 2002, a school board must adopt a written policy specifying the criteria for granting a high school diploma. The criteria must include the number of credits required and other elements as identified in paragraph (a) of ss. 118.33; pupil score on the high school graduation test, pupil academic performance, and recommendations of teachers. (See Appendix for the law.)

4. *What tasks face school boards as they develop grade advancement and high school graduation policies?*

School boards need to define what the criteria mean, set the level of expectation for the criteria, and determine how the criteria are brought together for decision-making.

5. *How soon must districts have a policy in place?*

According to current state law (ss.118.33 (1) (f) 1, 2, and 3), school boards must have a written graduation policy in place by September 1, 2002. Because the implementation date is two years away, some might feel that there is no immediate need to develop policy. However, several federal and district court cases argue that graduation policy should be created much earlier than September of 2002.

Legal counsel would look at graduation policies in two ways: what state statutes say and what related constitutional laws and rulings are relevant. The state statutes are discussed in this paper. In reference to constitutional law, two court cases are of particular interest: *Debra P v. Turlington* and *Bookhart v. Illinois State Board of Education*.¹

Rulings from *Debra P v. Turlington* instituted two important criteria for graduation testing and graduation policies: adequate notice and curricular validity.

“Adequate notice requires that students be told what a graduation test will cover several years before the test is implemented. Curricular validity means that the schools are teaching what is being tested....”
(Phillips, 1993, p. xix)

For the *Debra P* case, several years in advance meant four years.

Rulings from *Brookhart v. Illinois State Board of Education* deal primarily with testing accommodations for disabled students. However, the court in this case also indicated that students with disabilities needed more time to master the skills necessary for graduation; hence a longer notification period is needed. The general rule of thumb for notification is at least four years; however, some may argue that a longer notification timeline is warranted.

¹ For more information on court cases and legal requirements around graduation testing see: Phillips, S.E. (1993). *Legal implications of high-stakes assessments: What states should know*. Oak Brook, IL. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, and Herbert, J. P. and Hauser, R. M. (1999). *High stakes: Testing for tracking, promotion, and graduation*. Washington, D.C. National Research Council.

Three major requirements result from these court cases:

1. At least four years notification of a graduation requirement is necessary;
2. Students must be told how and on what they are going to be evaluated for graduation, and
3. Students must have an opportunity to learn the things on which they are being evaluated.

Wisconsin's new graduation law has three evaluative criteria: graduation test score, pupil academic performance, and teacher recommendations. To meet the constitutional requirements of adequate notification, graduation policies should be instituted at least four years in advance. The first class affected by the new law graduates in 2004. This means that graduation policies should be in place, at the latest, by fall of 2000.

Legal counsel would suggest that districts should be working on graduation policies as soon as possible and should have their policy written and communicated to all stakeholders by fall 2000. (See Appendix for suggested timelines.)

C. Importance of the Policies

1. *To whom do a district's grade advancement and high school graduation policies apply?*

The district grade advancement and high school graduation policies apply to all students. School boards need to keep that in mind as they form policy. In addition, all other relevant state and federal laws pertaining to students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency students should be reviewed.

2. *What is the focus of the new laws requiring grade advancement and high school graduation policies?*

The policy requirement for grade advancement and graduation is another facet of the department's on-going commitment to improving teaching and learning. With these policies, school districts have an additional opportunity to articulate precise expectations held for their students.

Furthermore, the new policy requirements expand accountability for learning beyond the school to the student. By publicly declaring the criteria for advancement and graduation, students and parents know what it is they are working toward, what they will need to do to meet the criteria, and understand the role that multiple measures play in the advancement/graduation decision-making process.

3. *Why are multiple measures critical in making advancement and graduation decisions?*

The decision to advance or retain or to award or not award a diploma affects a student significantly. Consequently, great care needs to be taken to determine whether a student meets the criteria developed by a school board. As with any decision-making process, the level of comfort and assurance in the decision corresponds to the degree to which evidence or documentation can be amassed, brought forward, and reviewed. This is the point at which multiple measures emerge as a critical element. Through the use of multiple measures, a student demonstrates his/her progress and success. Multiple measures allow a continuous record that documents student achievement, rather than depending on a point-in-time snapshot.

4. *What do multiple measures encompass?*

Multiple measures encompass two dimensions. The first dimension relates to multiple measures identified as criteria in the grade advancement and high school graduation laws; namely credits (high school only), test score, academic performance, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria (grade advancement only). The second dimension includes indicators incorporated into the school district's definition of each criterion.

Multiple measures ensure a broader look at student achievement, creating a sharp, detailed picture of a student's strengths. However, it does not come without cost. The use of multiple measures requires thought in their development, training to guarantee consistent implementation and application, and communication to increase understanding by all stakeholders. The costs are minor, though, when compared to the potential harm that can occur when student advancement or graduation decisions are made without good, comprehensive information.

5. *Why did the legislature make these changes?*

In many ways, these policy requirements are not that new. For as long as schools have existed, decisions around advancement and graduation have had to be made. Each year, students are retained or denied a diploma. The decisions are based, or at least should be based, on a set of criteria. The difference with the new laws is that a district must clearly and openly state expectations for students and detail the criteria to be met.

6. *What is the department's role in helping districts meet the policy requirements for grade advancement and high school graduation?*

The department strives to assist districts in policy implementation through its primary role of guidance. In this light, this document serves as one vehicle to support districts as they move through policy development. The department's

role also includes the development of tests used in the fourth and eighth grades, and high school to make determinations regarding advancement and graduation

7. *What other resources are available to school districts in developing the policies related to grade advancement and high school graduation?*

One resource available to districts is the CESA Standards and Assessment Centers located in each of the twelve CESAs and funded by the Department of Public Instruction. The directors of the centers can provide valuable assistance to districts in the areas of standards, assessment, and accountability. A second resource is the January 2000 Wisconsin Association of School Boards publication, "The Focus," in an article entitled "Promotion of 4th and 8th Grade Students."

8. *How can this document help a district?*

The department's primary role is to support districts with policy development and implementation. This document provides suggestions for districts as they develop policy. Ultimately, local school districts are free to determine their own ways of meeting the requirements of the new law.

Section 2—State and Local Tests

Overview

This section describes components of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS), outlines what content is covered in WSAS, and emphasizes the importance of local assessments.

A. Components of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System

1. *What constitutes the WSAS?*

The WSAS consists of the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test (WRCT) administered at grade three, the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) administered at grades four, eight, and ten, and the Wisconsin High School Graduation Test (HSGT) that is under development.

2. *When will the high school graduation test be administered?*

The high school graduation test will be first administered in fall, 2002. The use of the high school graduation test as a criterion for graduation applies to the class of 2004. In other words, those students who plan to graduate at the end of school year 2003-2004 will be the first group affected.

3. *What role do these tests play in advancement and graduation policies?*

Both new laws require a test score as a criterion in making advancement and graduation decisions. For fourth and eighth grade, the WKCE test results are used. For graduation, the high school graduation test results will be used.

4. *What WKCE test score does a district include as a policy criterion?*

WKCE reports scores in six content areas—reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. Writing results are reported using a holistic scale, one through six, with six as high. The other content area results are reported by proficiency levels of *advanced*, *proficient*, *basic*, and *minimal*. More about test score(s) appears in Section 3—Policy Criteria.

5. *What high school graduation test score does a district include as a policy criterion?*

The high school graduation test will report scores in four content areas—language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The results for each content area will be reported in only two ways—*meets or exceeds the standards* or *does not meet the standards*. More about test score(s) in Section 3—Policy Criteria.

6. *How does one learn more about the WSAS?*

Information about the *Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test* (3rd grade), *Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination* (grades four, eight, and ten), and the *Wisconsin High School Graduation Test* can be found on the department's web-site (www.dpi.state.wi.us). Materials related to the high school graduation test change frequently due to the evolving nature of this test so please visit the web-site often to obtain the most recent developments.

B. Content Assessed

1. *What is assessed in WKCE and HSGT?*

The department draws on the knowledge, concepts, and skills embedded in the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for the WKCE and HSGT. The Wisconsin Model Academic Standards describe what students are expected to know and be able to do at the three benchmark grades of fourth, eighth, and twelfth. Teachers at all grade levels use the standards to design instructional units.

2. *How does a district find out about the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards?*

The *Wisconsin Model Academic Standards* are available three ways—on the department's web-site, through Publication Sales (1-800-243-8782) as a print document, or on a CD-ROM.

3. *Are all of the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards assessed on the WKCE and HSGT?*

Model academic standards exist for eighteen subject areas. The language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies content and performance standards are the pool from which tests are adopted or developed. Not all standards in the above four subjects are assessed, however. Reasons for this vary. In some cases, the standard does not lend itself to large-scale assessment; such is the case with oral communication. In other cases, the standard requires more of a project or product response. In addition, the length of the test would be significantly longer were all standards assessed. Thus, the amount of class time devoted to state testing would dramatically increase.

4. *If a district or school is interested in finding out what academic standards are assessed on the WKCE or HSGT, is that information available?*

Yes. A study of the alignment between the *Wisconsin Model Academic Standards* and the WKCE for grades four, eight, and ten was conducted in 1998. The results of the study are available on the department web-site (www.dpi.state.wi.us). Eligible content for the HSGT has been identified and is also available on the web-site.

C. Importance of Local Assessment

- 1. If the WKCE and HSGT align to the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards, is it necessary for districts to do other standardized testing?***

That is a local school district decision. Many districts want a broader scope of standardized testing. Before a district implements additional standardized testing, key questions that should be asked are, “How will the information be used?” and “How does the information complement the WSAS?” The response to those questions oftentimes leads to an answer about incorporating other standardized tests into the district’s assessment plan.

- 2. If the WKCE and HSGT align with the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards, is it necessary for a district to do other local assessments?***

Absolutely.

- 3. Why?***

First, the WKCE and HSGT assess a portion of the language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies standards. The remaining standards in those subjects need to be assessed as well.

Second, Wisconsin students study and learn other subjects as well. Although the academic standards in those areas are not part of the state assessment, the academic standards for those respective subjects, e.g. music, visual arts and design, foreign language, and business education, frame instruction and are supported by the other standards, and consequently, assessment should follow.

Third, local assessments, whether teacher developed or purchased, contribute to the evidence or documentation that a district can use in defining academic performance for the grade advancement and high school graduation policies.

Finally, and most important, local classroom assessments provide the immediate feedback link between instruction in the classroom and what the student has learned. Classroom assessment carries great potential for determining student progress.

- 4. With all the local assessments, isn’t that a lot of testing?***

Assessment is not just testing. Assessment includes projects, performances, assignments, demonstrations, products, and presentations. Paper/pencil testing is just one method by which students may be assessed. By viewing assessment in a more panoramic fashion, an individual student showcases his/her learning in a variety of ways.

GRADE ADVANCEMENT AND GRADUATION CRITERIA	
Required Criteria	
4th and 8th Grade Advancement	High School Graduation
<p>Pupil score on state examination*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language arts • Reading • Mathematics • Science • Social Studies • Writing <p>Academic Performance</p> <p>Teacher Recommendations</p> <p>Other Academic Criteria</p>	<p>13 credits</p> <p>Pupil score on high school graduation test**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language arts • Mathematics • Science • Social Studies <p>Academic Performance</p> <p>Teacher Recommendations</p> <p>Board approved activity—each hour, each day</p>
Optional Criteria	
	<p>Additional 8.5 credits encouraged</p> <p>Community service</p>

*Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination. Pupil score reported in each subject as *Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Minimal*

** Wisconsin High School Graduation Test. Pupil score reported in each subject as *meets/exceeds the standard, does not meet the standard*

Section 3—Policy Criteria

Overview

This section describes the criteria that must be included in school district policies; how these criteria are or might be defined for the fourth/eighth grade advancement policy; and how these criteria are or might be defined for the high school graduation policy. For the reader's convenience, this section separates the 4th and 8th grade advancement policy portion from the high school graduation policy portion. As a result, some duplication of information may occur.

A. Presenting the Criteria

1. *What criteria must be included in school district policies for grade advancement and for high school graduation?*

For the grade advancement policy, the criteria must include

- Pupil's score on the fourth or eighth grade examination
- Pupil's academic performance
- Recommendations of teachers, solely based on pupil's academic performance
- Other academic criteria specified by the board.

For the high school graduation policy, the criteria must include

- 13 credits—4 English, 3 social studies, 2 mathematics, 2 science, 1.5 physical education, .5 health education
- Enrollment in a class or other board-approved activity each class period of each day
- Pupil's score on the high school graduation test
- Pupil's academic performance
- Recommendations of teachers.

The school board is strongly encouraged to require an additional 8.5 credits. In fact, all Wisconsin districts with high schools already require credits beyond the 13 specified by legislation. School boards may also require community service as a graduation criterion. (See the Appendix for laws related to grade advancement and high school graduation and statutory references for high school graduation policy criteria.)

2. *What was the purpose of modifying grade advancement and high school graduation policies to include pupil score, academic performance, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria?*

Previous legislation around grade advancement and high school graduation used test results as the exclusive criterion for decision making. Teacher recommendations and other evidence of academic performance were not elements in the law prior to the 1999-2001 biennial budget. The 1999

Wisconsin Act 9 changed the law to include multiple criteria in making these important decisions.

A general rule of thumb is that the more directly the decision affects an individual, the closer that decision-making should occur to the individual. The revision of the grade advancement and high school graduation policy laws brings decision-making closer to the student through the use of multiple measures that contribute valuable classroom and school level information about the student.

3. *What do pupil score, academic performance, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria mean in the context of the law?*

Defining these terms is key to policy development. Flexibility in the law allows each school district to create the definitions that it will use in its policy. The department will provide suggestions to guide the district in its discussion of the criteria and what they mean. That guidance can be found later in this section. In the end, though, the district has the responsibility to bring meaning to criteria.

4. *Pupil score on the state tests, pupil academic performance, and teacher recommendations are mentioned in both the grade advancement and high school graduation criteria. Must the two policies use the same definitions?*

Nothing in the law requires them to be the same, although there is a certain degree of logic in making them the same. Similarity enhances understanding and communication among students, parents, and teachers. Differences exist, however, in the nature and organizational structures of elementary, middle, and high school. Those differences need to be considered in drafting policy language.

For K-8 and union high school districts, separate boards of education govern policy adoption. It is their option to collaborate on policy development or engage in separate policy development work.

5. *Is the policy complete once criteria are defined?*

Defining the criteria is just the beginning. The next step is setting the level of expectation for each criterion. In other words, “How good is good enough?” The third step is how the criteria will form a clear, cohesive policy from which decisions on promotion and graduation can be made. Suggestions as to how the criteria can be combined will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

B. Defining 4th and 8th Grade Advancement Policy Criteria

1. *Test score is one criterion for the grade advancement policy. What test is used to define the criterion?*

The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) administered in the 4th and 8th grades is the test that must be incorporated into the grade advancement policy. Currently this test is administered in the spring of the year. Once the grade advancement policy goes into effect for school year 2002-03, students will have two opportunities to take the test. Information on the second administration will be provided at a later date.

2. *What is tested on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination?*

The WKCE assesses student proficiency in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. The tests are aligned to the *Wisconsin Model Academic Standards*. Information about the WKCE is available on the department's web-site (www.dpi.state.wi.us).

3. *How are the scores on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination reported?*

In spite of the language of the law, there is no single test score for WKCE. Performance on each sub-test (reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) is reported as *advanced*, *proficient*, *basic*, or *minimal*. Performance on the writing portion is reported using a holistic scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being high. In addition to the proficiency categories, the department provides other data such as stanines, percentiles, scaled scores, item analysis etc. to schools and districts.

4. *What policy decision does the school board need to make regarding test score for the grade advancement policy?*

The school board must determine how and to what extent performance on the WKCE will influence decisions about grade advancement. The board will need to establish the level of proficiency that it believes reflects acceptable performance—*advanced*, *proficient*, *basic*, or *minimal*. Then the board must decide in how many subjects a student needs to perform at or above that level to advance.

5. *What does the board need to do to define the academic performance criterion?*

The board must define what it means by academic performance and then determine what constitutes an acceptable level of performance by a student.

6. *What does academic performance mean as a criterion in grade advancement policy?*

Academic performance is a criterion that must be addressed for both grade advancement and high school graduation policy. While some similarity exists among all students, significant differences in students at grades 4, 8, and 12 are apparent; younger students lack an understanding of time and cause and effect. Consequently, the extent to which they fully comprehend the impact of academic performance related to grade advancement may be limited. As students mature, they become more accountable for their actions, especially those connected to performance in school.

Differences also exist in programming. At grade four, almost all students in a school district have the same instructional program—reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health education, and physical education. At grade eight, the consistency of the instructional program begins to decrease with the addition of electives. As students move through high school, the instructional program consistency further erodes with in-depth electives and coursework that emerge from interest or need. Consequently, it is suggested that the definition for academic performance be sensitive to the developmental stages and expectations of children as well as to instructional program variations.

7. *Is academic performance related solely to the subjects assessed on WKCE?*

The DPI developed model academic standards in 18 subjects. Although the WKCE assesses reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing, concepts from these subjects cross many disciplines. For example, measurement and geometry are important mathematics concepts that can be applied and reinforced in visual arts classes.

Although extension of student life beyond the school day is most evident at the high school level, sprinklings of this occur at the elementary level with more emerging at the middle school level. Art clubs, bands, drama troupes, and a variety of clubs are often available, depending on the district. The extent to which they connect with the academic program may open the possibility for inclusion as academic performance indicators.

The revision of the grade advancement policy requirements permits academic performance to take many forms. The challenge is to define academic performance in such a way that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning and proficiency.

8. *What are some suggestions as to how academic performance can be viewed at grades four and eight?*

Listed below are some ways that academic performance is collected, presented, demonstrated, and assessed. This is not an exhaustive list, but is offered as a point at which to begin discussions in the district.

- Performance assessments
- Report card grades
- Performance on the *Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test*
- Performance on other standardized tests administered in the district
- Portfolio review
- Independent work
- Attainment of model academic standards
- Unit test scores
- Attainment of grade level benchmarks
- Daily assignments
- Service learning

9. *What does a school board need to do to address the teacher recommendations criterion for the grade advancement policy?*

The school district must identify who in their district is eligible to provide a recommendation, what the recommendation represents or attests to, specify the form that the recommendation will take, and determine how many recommendations are required for advancement.

10. *Who is a teacher?*

A teacher is a department-licensed individual who can provide instruction to students. Usually this person is someone who is providing instruction in the classroom. However, many other education professionals also are part of a student's school life and career—district administrators, principals, guidance counselors, and others. Because the intent of this aspect of the policy is to secure a recommendation, the district may want to consider whether the definition of teacher is broad enough to include all the education professionals who may be able to provide information about the student.

11. *Are teacher recommendations limited to the classroom teacher for fourth graders and to the teachers of subjects tested on the WKCE for eighth graders?*

The law does not state that the teacher must be the classroom teacher or from a subject assessed on the WKCE. Teachers of the visual arts, vocational subjects, music, foreign language, health and physical education, special education etc. may all be included as potential individuals to recommend a

student. How a school district writes its policy determines who provides the recommendation.

12. *What does a teacher recommendation represent?*

While great flexibility exists in interpreting the definition of recommendation, it is imperative that each district states clearly what the teacher recommendation represents for them. The definition becomes the rubric or basis upon which the teacher makes the recommendation. Specificity in defining teacher recommendation protects both the student and the teacher. From the student perspective, the definition clearly outlines precise expectations that s/he must fulfil to receive a recommendation. From the teacher perspective, the definition creates a uniform basis upon which student work is viewed.

Some possibilities for what the teacher recommendation represents are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a point from which to begin district discussions.

- Receipt of a passing score in a subject or all subjects
- Development of a portfolio that illustrates proficiency and growth
- Attainment of model academic standards
- Verification of student's ability to be successful at the next level of education
- Testimony to a student's success in classwork, co-curriculars, and community service
- Completion of course of study
- Demonstration of citizenship qualities necessary for life in the community

13. *What form does a teacher recommendation take?*

The form of a recommendation varies depending on how a district defines what a recommendation represents. Some possible forms the recommendation could take are:

- Letter
- Petition-like document
- Receipt of a passing grade
- Voting process at faculty meeting
- Faculty acceptance/endorsement of a portfolio

14. *What does other academic criteria mean?*

Defining other academic criteria is a bit difficult because a district can take more than one approach. One way to look at other academic criteria is as a further explanation of what is incorporated in the academic performance criteria. For example, one district may define academic performance as

receiving a “C” or better in reading, mathematics, and either science or social studies each semester in grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. Other academic criteria might be review of the reading and mathematics portfolios.

Another way to view other academic criteria is as an opportunity to include policy provisions that certain conditions must be met, or come into play, to influence the decision of whether a child is advanced or retained. In this instance, the district may include a statement that requires a student to attend after school study sessions or summer school in lieu of retention. Another example would be to include a statement that no student may be retained more than once.

15. *Are there any further thoughts on the grade advancement policy?*

While the goal of this policy is grade advancement, the reality is that some students may be retained. This is of great concern. Research indicates that student retention, especially in the long term, does not produce the positive results that one hopes would occur. If a student experiences difficulty grasping concepts and ideas the first time around, it is unlikely that providing more of the same a second time will result in significant improvement. It is suggested that boards consult the retention research and be aware of its implication as they develop grade advancement policy.

Some districts have student retention policies and criteria in place for retaining pupils for reasons like readiness. They may have policies that say a student may not be retained more than once regardless of the reason for retention. These are discretionary policies that can be changed. Since the legislature has mandated that every district have advancement policies at fourth and eighth grades, districts will seriously want to review discretionary policies that if combined with retentions at fourth and eighth grades could result in children being harmed.

Rather than approaching the grade advancement policy from a reactive stance, the focus needs to be proactive. Beginning in kindergarten, student progress and achievement must be closely monitored so that as soon as a student begins to experience difficulty, support is provided. Obviously, being able to act in this manner means that a closely woven safety net is in place to help students. Such a system is especially critical throughout the elementary years, and needs to extend to the middle school, and continue through the high school.

C. Defining the High School Graduation Policy Criteria

1. *What are the credit requirements for high school graduation?*

State law requires thirteen credits—4 in English language arts, 3 in social studies, 2 in mathematics, 2 in science, 1.5 in physical education, and .5 in health education. School districts are encouraged to require an additional 8.5 credits. Even if a student does not meet the 13-credit requirement, a school board may award a diploma if a student is enrolled in alternative education. To do so the school board must determine that the pupil has demonstrated a level of proficiency (in the subjects that constitute the 13 credits) equivalent to that which the pupil would have attained if s/he satisfied the regular requirements. Alternative education is defined in ss. 115.28(7)(e)1.

2. *Does a district need to change its credit requirements?*

As a district revises its high school graduation policy, a review of the credit requirements is suggested. Many districts have not reviewed their high school graduation policies since they were developed to meet the 1985 law. Given what recent brain research tells us about how people learn, increasing evidence underscores the importance of arts education as a part of every student's required coursework, and leads to the possibility of adding an arts requirements.

3. *Test score is one criterion for the high school graduation policy. What test is used to define the criterion?*

The statewide high school graduation test is the one that is incorporated into the high school graduation policy. According to state law, each school district operating high school grades must administer a high school graduation test beginning in the eleventh grade with at least four opportunities to take the test before graduation. If a district adopted the *Wisconsin Model Academic Content Standards*, it may use either the department-developed test or develop or purchase a test of its own. If a district did not adopt the *Wisconsin Model Academic Content Standards*, the district will have to develop or purchase its own test. Districts adopting or developing their own tests must notify the department by October 1 the year before the adopted or developed test is used.

4. *What content will be tested on the high school graduation test?*

The state high school graduation test will assess whether students have met the academic standards for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Much information has been developed about the test; check the department web-site (www.dpi.state.wi.us).

5. *How will the score on the high school graduation test be reported?*

The department will report scores by subject area; no combined test score will be provided for the high school graduation test. The department-developed test will report student performance as *meets/exceeds the standards* or *does not meet the standards* for each of the four assessed subjects. The department will also provide a variety of additional test result information to schools and districts—percentiles, stanines, scaled score, item analysis, and others.

6. *What is the policy decision that a school board needs to make regarding test score?*

The school board needs to determine to what extent performance on the high school graduation test influences the decision related to the awarding of a diploma. Although the law says test score, it is important to keep in mind that a student will receive a test score for each of the four subjects (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) indicating whether s/he has met the standards. The board will need to decide how many subjects the student must receive a score of meets/exceeds the standards to satisfy the district's performance level requirement.

7. *In order to meet the criterion for academic performance, what will the board need to establish?*

The school board will need to define what it means by academic performance and then determine what an acceptable level of performance is.

8. *What does academic performance mean as a criterion in a high school graduation policy?*

On its face, the definition for academic performance seems to be quite clear. However, when one thinks about the many dimensions of school, the definition becomes more involved. For almost as long as high schools have been in existence, they have served three purposes. High schools have been charged with developing **scholarship** (knowledge and skills), **citizenship** (ability to function in a democratic society), and **career development** (preparation for moving into the workforce). Accepting this statement of current purposes of schooling expands the definition of academic performance to include those areas not reflected on the state assessments.

The DPI developed model academic standards in 18 subjects. Numerous concepts fall across all disciplines. For example, each of the subject area standards documents refers to communication. While specific kinds of communication vary across the documents, all have reading, writing, and speaking as key skills. Some subject areas provide additional communication methods such as the visual communication used in art and design. Concepts such as inquiry (the ability to ask questions, develop hypotheses, analyze

information and data) and economics (production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods) appear in their home disciplines of science and social studies. They are also found in business education, family and consumer education, mathematics, and visual arts and design.

Student life goes beyond the formal school day. For many students, the day expands to include forensics, music, cooperative learning experiences, community service etc. Oftentimes, these co-curricular experiences are as valuable as actual classes. In fact, long after high school is over, the memories and lessons learned through co-curricular activities and events are often more vivid and character-shaping than the day-to-day assignments generated for a class.

New knowledge about how the brain works shows us that academic achievement involves a wider variety of intelligences than we previously believed. Students employ multiple intelligences that help them learn better, faster, and with deeper understanding.

All of this leads to the conclusion that academic performance can take many forms. The revision of the high school graduation policy allows for multiple measures. The challenge to the board is to define academic performance in such a way that it enables students to illustrate, demonstrate, and attest to the knowledge and skills that they have learned, making them ready to move to the next stage of their lives.

9. *What are some suggestions for looking at academic performance?*

As mentioned earlier, each board must decide what academic performance means in that district and what the acceptable level of performance is to meet the academic performance criterion. Following are some indicators with descriptors that illustrate academic performance. In many cases, the descriptors could appear under several indicators. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather is a base on which to begin discussions.

Suggestions for Defining Academic Performance

Co-curriculars

Student government
Music/drama
Debate/forensics
Athletics
Vocational Service
Organizations

Course Rigor

Advanced Placement
Honors
Youth Options
Regular, not remedial

Showcase

Portfolio
Senior Project
Performance Assessments

Concentration

In-depth study
Contract with student
Supervised work experience

Achievement

GPA, overall
GPA, concentrated

Other Test Performance

ACT
SAT
WKCE
Performance Assessments
Other district assessment

Citizenship

Service learning
Supervised work experience
Community involvement
School service

**Achievement Relative to
Capacity/Effort**

Individual Education Plan
Gifted/Talented
Individual Accommodation Plan

Educated Individual

Breadth of classes
Number of courses
Advanced Placement

Miscellaneous

Number of books read

10. *What does a school board need to do to meet the teacher recommendations criterion for the high school graduation policy?*

The school board must identify who in the district is eligible to provide a recommendation, what the recommendation represents or attests to, to specify the form that the recommendation will take, and how many recommendations are required by the district.

11. *Who is a teacher?*

A teacher is a department-licensed individual who can provide instruction to students. Usually this person is someone who provides instruction in the classroom. However, many other education professionals also are part of a student's school life and career—district administrators, principals, guidance counselors, and others. Because the intent of this aspect of the policy is to secure a recommendation, the district may want to consider whether the definition of teacher is broad enough to include all the education professionals who may be able to provide information about the student.

12. *Are teacher recommendations limited to teachers of subjects tested on the high school graduation test?*

The law does not state that the teacher must be from a subject tested on the high school graduation test. Teachers of the visual arts, vocational, music, foreign language, health and physical education, special education etc. may all be included as potential individuals to recommend a student. How a school district writes its policy determines who provides the recommendation.

13. *What does a teacher recommendation represent?*

While great flexibility exists in interpreting the definition of recommendation, it is imperative that each district states clearly what the teacher recommendation represents for them. The definition becomes the rubric or basis upon which the teacher makes the recommendation. Specificity in defining teacher recommendation protects both the student and the teacher. From the student perspective, the definition clearly outlines precise expectations that s/he must fulfil to receive a recommendation. From the teacher perspective, the definition creates a uniform basis upon which student work is reviewed.

Some possibilities for what teacher recommendation represents are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list, but is rather a point from which to begin district discussions.

- Receipt of a passing grade in a subject
- Development of a portfolio that illustrates proficiency and growth
- Attainment of model academic standards

- Completion of preparation to move to either post-secondary education or workplace
- Testimony to a student's success in classwork, co-curriculars, and community service
- Successful presentation of a senior project or thesis
- Completion of a course sequence
- Demonstration of citizenship qualities necessary for life in the community

14. What form does a teacher recommendation take?

The form of a recommendation varies depending on how a district defines what a recommendation represents. Some possible forms the recommendation could take are:

- Letter
- Petition-like document
- Receipt of a passing grade
- Voting process at faculty meeting
- Completion of a mentorship, service as a student aide, coop agreement
- Faculty acceptance of a senior project, thesis or portfolio
- Advisor/advisee arrangement

Section 4—Putting the Pieces Together

Overview

This section outlines a variety of issues to consider, describes ways to bring the criteria together into a policy, and sketches sample policy approaches to inform a district's thinking.

A. Issues to Consider

When developing policy for grade advancement and high school graduation, consideration should be directed to process, policy content, and procedures. Clarity in each of these three items will determine the success of the policy. The amount of attention directed to these issues through the development and implementation phases will directly affect the degree to which stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, and community members) accept the policy as even-handed.

As the district begins development of the policy, the reason for the revision of the grade advancement and high school graduation statutes should be kept in mind. Originally, the law required only a test score at the fourth and eighth grade level. At the high school level, credits and the test were the sole determiners for graduation. This approach did not sit well with many parents, educators, and other community members, and prompted a change in the law. Consequently, the district's policy focus should be on meeting the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards and the use of multiple measures to demonstrate that achievement.

The process and content of grade advancement and high school graduation policies are part of a much larger picture that illustrates evidence of success for students and schools. Many districts draw a big picture by having district assessment plans in place. A district assessment plan outlines the district's guiding principles for assessment, details the scope and goals of assessment measures, and includes the policies and practices related to assessment. For those districts, a strong foundation for building grade advancement and high school graduation policies is in place.

Instituting a process that allows for open discussion during policy formulation creates public buy-in and leads to good decision-making. Good communication among all stakeholders guarantees that the policy does not come as a surprise. Most districts already have a process in place for policy development. Because of the importance and impact of grade advancement and high school graduation policies, care needs to be taken to ensure adequate time for everyone's consideration, review, and feedback prior to adoption of the policy.

The grade advancement policy is for students moving from fourth to fifth grade and eighth to ninth grade. The high school graduation policy is for students graduating from high school, not for entrance into college or university. While setting high expectations is a key element for both student and school success, striking the balance between realistic and idealistic approaches is the goal.

Policy development asks that terms such as pupil score, academic performance, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria be defined for each district. Although this requirement is new, the practice of retaining a student or denying a diploma is not. Therefore, one place to start is by reviewing current policies. In addition to the review, data should be gathered regarding the impact that those policies have had on advancement and graduation in the past. By analyzing the impact of this data, a district may develop ideas about how it wants the revised grade advancement and graduation policies to look.

In putting the policy together, keep in mind the parent opt-out provision that exists for the fourth and eighth grade tests as well as for the high school graduation test. This provision allows parents to excuse their children from statewide tests. Consequently, the district policy needs to reflect how the absence of a test score influences decisions regarding advancement or graduation.

While creating a process and developing policy content are important, the critical piece, the piece that determines success, is the procedure for implementation and continuation. For example, two school districts might enact the same policy for fourth and eighth grade advancement. Both school districts retain a fourth grader and both sets of parents pursue the matter in court. In one case, the decision to retain is upheld and in the other the decision is overturned. The difference may be attributed to the procedures in place around implementation.

As part of the implementation phase, responsibilities need to be detailed. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: defining how communication with students and parents occurs; designating the individual responsible for the communication; setting timelines for communication and compilation of materials; and determining what training needs to occur in order for administrators and teachers to implement policy fairly and consistently. Each school and district will need to develop its own list of responsibilities related specifically to its own policy.

Implementation is not a one-year experience. Each year new students enter the 4th grade, 8th grade, and become eligible for graduation; each year those students bring parents with them; each year new administrators and teachers enter or transfer within the system—all of which demands that local school districts institutionalize communication vehicles to keep everyone informed one year to the next.

Process, policy content, and procedures are key concepts to keep in mind as the district maps its response to grade advancement and high school graduation laws. Before enacting district policies, two steps are suggested.

- **Reality check.** Once a district drafts policy for grade advancement and high school graduation, do a “real student” check. In other words, take a random sample of fourth graders, eighth graders, juniors and seniors and apply the policy to them. Does the policy produce the results desired? Is the policy workable? Is the policy understandable? What is the response from those using

the policy? Without this step, dangerous outcomes may lie in wait for the unsuspecting district about the impact of the policy or its clarity.

- **Legal counsel.** As with any policy adoption, seeking advice of the district's legal counsel is prudent.

B. Possible Ways to Bring the Criteria Together

Grade advancement and high school graduation policies must address the statutory criteria mentioned previously. (See page 14 for chart outlining the criteria.) In this section, possible ways to bring the criteria together will be discussed.

The challenge is to bring credits (high school only), pupil scores on the state test, academic performance, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria (fourth and eighth grade only) together in a policy. The law requires that all criteria be given meaning in the policy; however, it does not necessarily mean that the policy requires every student to meet all criteria. This flexibility is consistent with the parent opt-out provision for testing.

Flexibility does exist for districts in policy formation. Although many configurations are possible, policy formation basically comes down to two approaches: a sequential decision approach or a combination decision approach.

The *sequential decision approach* can be characterized as a tree diagram with sequential decisions made at critical junctures similar to a set of "if/then" statements. A student achieves advancement or graduation by proceeding through a set of sequential decisions. With the sequential decision policy construction, advancement or graduation may be reached although a student does not meet all criteria. This sequential approach establishes a mechanism that provides multiple means for a student to demonstrate success.

In the *combination decision approach*, the policy requires that a certain number or all of the criteria must be met for advancement or graduation to occur. This combination approach can take several forms—compensatory, student selection, or conjunctive. Although each of the three forms or frameworks is different, all are similar in that criteria are brought together or combined to make the advancement or graduation decision.

In the *compensatory* framework, points are given for performance in each of the criteria. As long as the student meets the point requirement, advancement or graduation occurs. With the compensatory framework for combining criteria, poor performance in one criterion may be compensated for by outstanding performance in another.

A second form of the combination approach is a *student selection* or *menu* framework. With this form, the policy sets the number of criteria that must be met, then the student selects the evidence to demonstrate that the criteria are met. While flexibility is a strength with this form, careful record-keeping is an absolute must

because a variety of avenues exists for the student to meet advancement or graduation criteria.

A third form of the combination approach is the *conjunctive* framework. In this form, a student must meet all the criteria required in policy. This conjunctive form may be the least forgiving in that a student missing any one of the criteria is retained or deprived of a diploma. All or nothing is the result of this framework.

In conclusion, regardless of the approach used, each school district must define what test score, academic criteria, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria means for them. Each district must set the level of expectation for each criterion. In other words, “How good is good enough?” Then the district must determine how the criteria will form a clear, cohesive policy from which decisions on advancement and graduation can be made.

C. Examples of Policy Approaches

Examples of policy approaches for advancement and high school graduation are provided on the following pages. The focus is on how the criteria come together. The graduation policy examples assume that not only are credit requirements established but also those policies related to students being involved in board-approved activities each period of each day have been established. Although community service is not included in the following examples, it does not preclude a district from inserting that requirement if it already has established it as a criterion or wishes to add it.

The examples are provided to generate discussion for school districts. **Regardless of the approach, advantages and disadvantages exist.** Notes for each example are provided; however, the comments are not a definitive statement and need to be considered in the context of the individual school district.

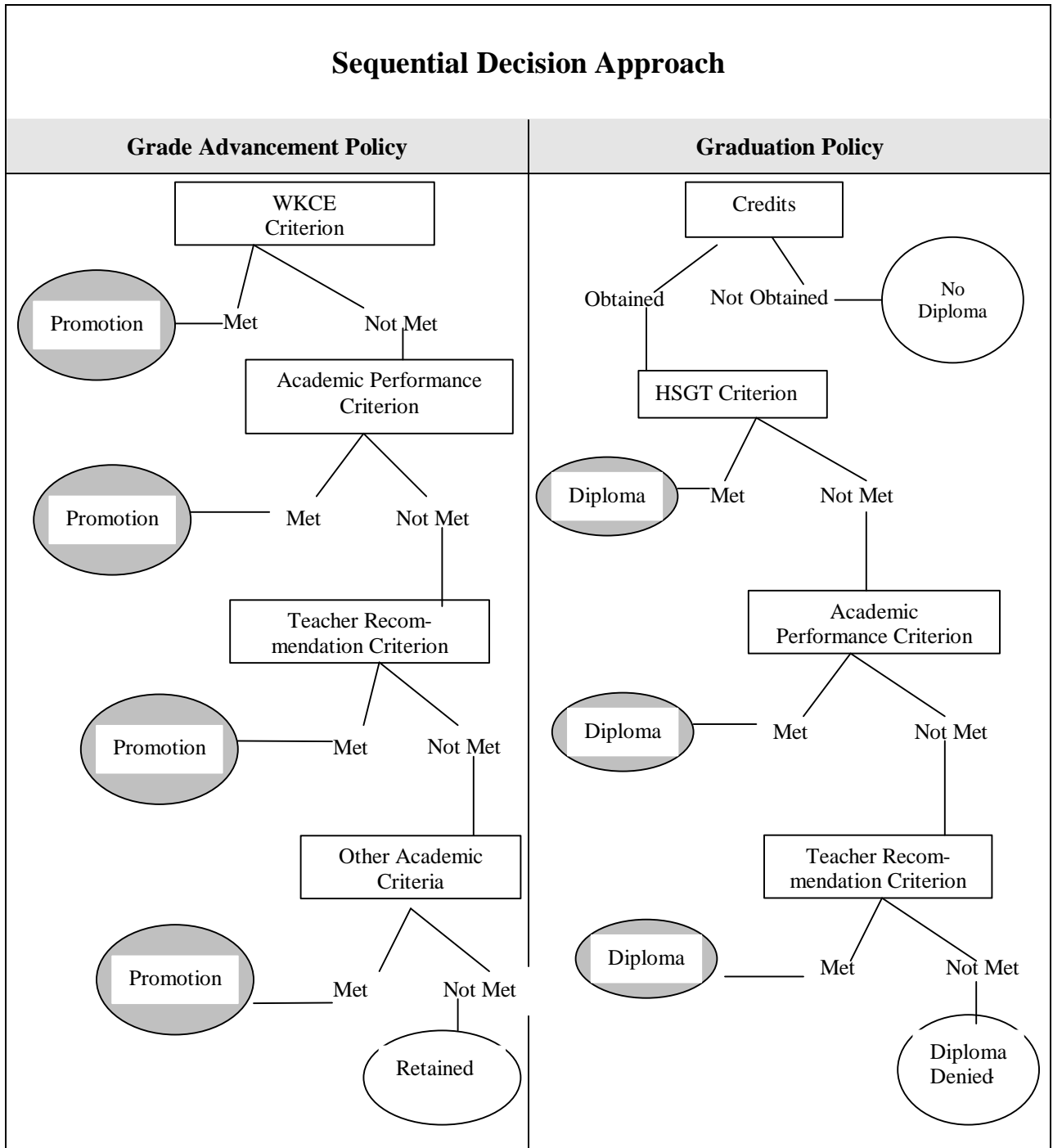
Sequential Decision Approach

Notes: In the following examples, the WKCE score criterion is the basis for grade advancement; credit acquisition is a requirement leading to a diploma. In the grade advancement policy example, if a student meets the WKCE criterion, advancement occurs. If a student does not meet the WKCE criterion, the other criteria become the determiners.

In the graduation policy example, if a student meets the district's high school graduation test criterion, graduation occurs. If a student does not meet it, the other criteria then become determiners. In the example, students whose parents opt them out of the high school graduation test, lose the test score as a criterion and the next criterion is reviewed.

Considerations:

- Criteria may be arranged in whatever sequence the district deems appropriate.
- The higher the test score criterion is placed on the "tree," the greater the incentive for taking the test.
- The higher the test score is placed on the "tree," the more data collection and review of other criteria are reduced.
- Sequential Decision Approach limits the number of students for whom all criteria are reviewed.
- A student opted-out of either the WKCE or HSGT by a parent loses that criterion as a decision-making possibility.
- Potential danger exists if HSGT is last on the "tree" in that the test becomes the single determining factor.



Sample High School Graduation Policy—Sequential Decision Approach

Note: The following policy statement is provided only as an example of how the sequential decision approach might look. It is not meant to serve as a model policy or recommended policy. As with all policies, careful review by legal counsel is advised.

In order for a student to graduate from the Anywhere School District, the student must complete 24 credits of study. Of the 24 credits, 13 are required under state statute—4 credits in English language arts, 3 in social studies, 2 in mathematics, 2 in science, 1.5 in physical education, and .5 in health education. In addition, the district requires that at least 1 credit in the fine arts and 1 credit in a vocational course be obtained.

Other criteria for graduation are

- Receiving a score of *meets/exceeds standards* on two or more of the four sub-tests that comprise the state-developed High School Graduation Test
- Demonstrating academic performance by achieving a grade point average of 2.0 or above **or** by scoring at the *basic* or above on 3 or more sub-tests on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination **or** successfully completing one Academic Placement course, one course offered through Youth Options, or one coop work experience
- Securing four letters of recommendation from teachers from whom the student has taken courses attesting to the student's knowledge and skill levels

To be considered for a diploma, the student must acquire credits as outlined. Decision-making then is based on fulfilling the other criteria. Should the student meet the test score criterion, a student is eligible to receive a diploma. If the test score criterion is not met, the student's academic performance is reviewed. If the student meets the academic performance definition, the student is eligible to receive a diploma. If the student does not meet the academic performance criterion, the student needs to secure four letters of recommendation. If a student meets the teacher recommendations criterion, the student is eligible to receive a diploma. If the student does not meet the teacher recommendations criterion, the student is denied a diploma

Combination Approach—Compensatory Framework

Notes: The compensatory framework allows a student to compensate for poor performance on one criterion by strong performance on another criterion. Each criterion potentially contributes to the grade advancement/graduation decision. Usually, a compensatory framework is built on a point system identifying the total number of points possible, with each criterion carrying an equal number of points. A student must acquire a certain number of points to advance or graduate.

The example provided has a maximum of 18 points possible for advancement and 12 points for graduation. In the example, a student needs to acquire $\frac{2}{3}$ of the points possible for advancement/graduation or 12 points for advancement and 8 points for graduation. The points cited are for example purposes only. School districts may establish whatever point system desired.

The compensatory framework usually suggests that a range of points is possible in each criterion thereby creating a need to develop a set of rubrics for each criterion describing what the performance looks like for each of the point values. With this framework, the district needs to determine how total point requirement and accumulation are taken into consideration for those students whose parents opted them out of the test.

Considerations:

- Determining total number of points possible and number of points necessary is a critical aspect.
- Developing descriptions or rubrics for point values requires investment of staff time.
- Structuring point system for students whose parents have opted them out of the test needs to be addressed.
- Framework allows for individual student strengths to surface.
- Framework requires an individual to compute various ways that student could achieve necessary points.

<i>Combination Approach—Compensatory Framework</i>	
Grade Advancement Policy	Graduation Policy
<p>18 possible points (example)</p> <p>12 points (example) through any combination of the following required for promotion:</p> <p>Academic Performance 0—6 pts</p> <p>Test Score 0—6 pts (1 point per test)</p> <p>Teacher Recommendation up to 0—6 pts</p> <p>Should a student not acquire 12 points, the other academic criteria are reviewed for decision-making.</p>	<p>12 possible points (example)</p> <p>Credits plus 8 points (example) through any of the following required for graduation:</p> <p>High School Graduation Test 0—4 (1 point per test)</p> <p>Academic Performance 0—4</p> <p>Teacher Recommendation 0—4</p>

**Sample Grade Advancement Policy—Combination Approach,
Compensatory Framework**

Note: The following policy is provided only as an example of how the combination approach might look. It is not meant to serve as a model policy or recommended policy. As with all policies, careful review by legal counsel is advised.

The Nature Valley School District will promote students from the fourth to fifth grade and from the eighth to ninth grade based on a student's academic performance, test score, and teacher recommendations.

Criteria will be defined in the following way:

- Academic Performance: Report card grades
- Test Score: Performance on the WKCE
- Teacher Recommendations: Faculty endorsement of the student's writing portfolio plus signatures from at least two teachers attesting to the student's attainment of grade level standards

The grade advancement decision will be based on the student's ability to accumulate a minimum of 12 points from either two or three of the criteria with a maximum of 18 points possible across the three criteria.

Point determinations are based on the following standards:

Academic Performance: Report Card Grades

- 6 points = semester grades of A and B in grade level reading and mathematics over the past two school year
- 5 points = semester grades of B in grade level reading and mathematics over the past two school years
- 4 points = semester grades of B and C in grade level reading and mathematics over the past two school years
- 3 points = semester grades of C in grade level reading and mathematics over the past two school years
- 2 points = semester grades of D in grade level reading and mathematics over the past two school years *or* grades of C or better in below grade level reading and mathematics courses
- 1 point = semester grades of D in below grade level reading and mathematics courses

Test Score: Performance on WKCE

- 1 point for each subject scored at *basic* or above on the reading, language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics subtests and
- 1 point for scoring at or above a “3” on the writing subtest

Teacher Recommendations: Faculty Endorsements

- 1 - 4 points possible for faculty acceptance of writing portfolio
- 1 - 2 points possible for teacher signature attesting to accomplishment of standards in any subject area.

For students who are excused or opted-out of the test by their parents, 8 points must be acquired through the other criteria.

If a student does not meet the point requirement, the student is either retained or the parent agrees that the child will meet the other academic criteria requirement. The other academic criterion requires that the child will participate in the district’s tutoring program during the coming year.

Combination Approach—Student Selection Framework

Notes: With the student selection framework, the district identifies a variety of indicators for meeting criteria. The student selects whatever number of indicators is required by board policy. Should the district desire, it not only can set a number of indicators to be attained, but also specify the number of criteria from which those indicators are derived. For example, a district could specify that a student needs to demonstrate success in four indicators to receive a diploma or it could specify that the four indicators must come from at least two criteria.

Considerations:

- Great flexibility for student choice exists.
- Great responsibility rests on student to select, develop, and submit materials.
- District needs to set clear description of process for student to follow.
- Appropriateness of this model for various age groups needs to be discussed.
- District/school record-keeping and review of student work may be substantial.
- Opportunity for use of multiple measures is great.

<i>Combination Approach—Student Selection Framework</i>	
Grade Advancement Policy	Graduation Policy
Examples listed after indicators are for illustrative purposes. Districts need to identify indicators reflective of their goals.	
<p>Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Portfolio) Indicator 2 (Grades) Indicator 3 (WRCT Score) Indicator 4 (Service Learning) <p>WKCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Lang.Arts) Indicator 2 (Writing) Indicator 3 (Mathematics) Indicator 4 (Science) Indicator 5 (Soc. Studies) Indicator 6 (Reading) <p>Teacher Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Passing grade) Indicator 2 (Checklist) Indicator 3 (Letter) Indicator 4 (Mentorship) <p>Other Academic Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Summer school) Indicator 2 (After school) Indicator 3 (Readiness) Indicator 4 (Daily Assignment) 	<p>Credit Requirement</p> <p>Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (GPA) Indicator 2 (Com. Serv.) Indicator 3 (AP Coursework) Indicator 4 (Portfolio) <p>HSGT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Meet English Standard) Indicator 2 (Meet math standard) Indicator 3 (Meet science stand.) Indicator 4 (Meet social studies standard) <p>Teacher Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Letter) Indicator 2 (Mentorship) Indicator 3 (Faculty vote) Indicator 4 (Acceptance of senior project)

***Sample High School Graduation Policy—Combination Approach,
Student Selection Framework***

Note: The following policy statement is provided only as an example of how the combination approach might look. It is not meant to serve as a model policy or recommended policy. As with all policies, careful review by legal counsel is advised.

The Somewhere School District requires a student to earn 24 credits to graduate. Thirteen credits are prescribed by state law—4 in English language arts, 3 in social studies, 2 in mathematics, 2 in science, 1.5 in physical education, and .5 in health education. The student must also demonstrate achievement in three criteria: validation of knowledge and skills through performance on the High School Graduation Test and/or accomplishment of academic performance and/or acquisition of teacher recommendations. For each of the three criteria, four indicators are identified. A student is required to submit evidence that any six indicators of the student's choice have been met. For those students whose parents have opted them out of the HSGT, six indicators are still required; however, they are limited to the academic performance and teacher recommendations criteria.

District-approved indicators are:

A. High School Graduation Test

1. Receive score of *meets/exceeds the standards* on English language arts sub-test
2. Receive score of *meets/exceeds the standards* on mathematics subtest
3. Receive score of *meets/exceeds the standards* on science subtest
4. Receive score of *meets/exceeds the standards* on social studies subtest

B. Academic Performance

1. Have an overall grade point of 2.0 or better
2. Complete 50 hours of community service
3. Participate in school supervised work experience for at least one semester
4. Successfully complete at least three additional courses in any combination of English language arts, mathematics, science, and/or social studies beyond those credits required

C. Teacher Recommendations

1. Receive a grade of "C" or better in all coursework for all semesters enrolled
2. Submit letter from a teacher in a subject assessed on the graduation test and letter from teacher in an elected area describing student progress toward meeting academic standards
3. Successfully complete a mentorship with a teacher
4. Submit statement to faculty detailing why student believes s/he has met scholarship, citizenship, and career development goals of the district

Combination Approach—Conjunctive Framework

Notes: The conjunctive framework requires a student of fulfill each criterion for advancement or graduation to occur. Depending on district definition of the criteria and what performance level is set, the conjunctive framework may be the least forgiving. If a student does not meet any one of the criteria, promotion or graduation is not realized. With this framework, a student opted-out of the test could graduate because other criteria were met, while another student not opted-out is denied advancement or graduation because the test score criterion was not met. Materials and record management may present additional challenges because of the volume of documentation collected for each student.

Considerations:

- Because all students need each criterion, careful consideration needs to be directed to how the work of students whose parents opted them out of the test are reviewed.
- Materials and record management present a unique challenge in that all students are submitting materials in all areas.
- Questions could arise if a student met all criteria except test score.
- This model favors students who are opted-out of the test. Regardless of acceptable level of performance set by district, the students taking the test is disadvantaged in that they need to complete one more criterion.

<i>Combination Approach—Conjunctive Framework</i>	
Grade Advancement Policy	Graduation Policy
<p>Academic Performance</p> <p>Plus</p> <p>WKCE Test Performance as defined by district</p> <p>Plus</p> <p>Teacher Recommendations Obtained</p> <p>Plus</p> <p>Other Academic Criteria</p> <div> <div>Academic Performance</div> <div>+</div> <div>WKCE</div> <div>+</div> </div> <div> <div>Teacher Recommendation</div> <div>+</div> <div>Other Academic Criteria</div> <div>=</div> </div> <p>Promotion</p>	<p>Required credits achieved</p> <p>Plus</p> <p>HSGT Performance as defined by district</p> <p>Plus</p> <p>Academic Performance Definitions Met</p> <p>Plus</p> <p>Teacher Recommendations Obtained</p> <div> <div>Credits</div> <div>+</div> <div>HSGT</div> <div>+</div> </div> <div> <div>Academic Performance</div> <div>+</div> <div>Teacher Recommendation</div> <div>=</div> </div> <p>Diploma</p>

***Sample Grade Advancement Policy—Combination Approach,
Conjunctive Framework***

Note: The following policy statement is provided only as an example of how the combination approach might look. It is not meant to serve as a model policy or recommended policy. As with all policies, careful review by legal counsel is advised.

The Pleasantville School District requires that students meet the district developed criteria for academic performance, performance on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination, teacher recommendations, and other academic criteria to advance from grade four to five and from grade eight to nine.

Academic performance shall be defined as a grade point average of 1.5 or above with the average derived through the use of semester grades. Performance on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination shall be defined as a score of *basic* or above on at least 2 sub-tests.

Teacher recommendations shall be defined as teacher completion of a grade level standards checklist as developed by district with indication that student has achieved or is making substantial progress toward achievement of at least 60% of the grade level standards.

Other academic criteria shall be defined for fourth graders as a score of *basic* or above on the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test. Other academic criteria for eighth graders shall be defined as successful completion of a middle level literacy portfolio designed by the district.

For those students opted-out of the test, judgement is based on the other three specified criteria.

Section 5—What Do These Policies Mean for Your School and District

Policies are created every day in school districts across Wisconsin. At various levels, all of them affect the enterprise of school. In that respect, development and implementation of grade advancement and high school graduation policies do not differ much from other policies. However, because these policies go straight to the heart of a student's academic career, they are particularly sensitive in the way they touch a larger population than most other policies. Therefore, clear, sensible and on-going connections to parents and teachers, to those individuals who link most closely to students, are especially critical.

To serve this connection, creating vehicles for on-going communication regarding student progress and achievement is one of the first steps. Communication is shared not only about policy development but also needs to continue throughout each year by informing parents and teachers about policies, updating parents on student progress, and reporting to the board on policy implementation and its impact.

The policies developed by the board represent the community's expectations for the education of its children. The grade advancement policies not only delineate those expectations but also serve as a focal point for professional development and other school improvement efforts. As with any change, board and administrative leadership underwrite consistent and informed implementation through strengthening the professional practice related to standards, assessment, and accountability.

Finally, thoughtful work and consideration are essential for effective grade advancement and graduation policy development. As a district begins its work, it must keep in mind the role these policies will play. The policies do not stand alone. Nested in the context of high academic standards and standards of the heart, the policies outline the evidence of success that an individual student presents to the school and community. Beyond that, the evidence represents the community's collective expectation for its children and the future.

Toolkit

This section includes several tools that might be used by districts in policy development. The materials may be adapted by districts to meet their needs.

- **Discussion Aids**—set of black line overheads that are being used in department presentations on grade advancement and high school graduation policy development. Many of the slides are pages excerpted from earlier in this document. For ease in use, those pages are repeated in this section.
- **Feature Matrix**—grid listing some of the features that are part of the various policy approaches and can be used to compare the approaches
- **District Checklist**—framework that can be used for evaluating progress of policy development

GRADE ADVANCEMENT AND GRADUATION CRITERIA	
Required Criteria	
4th and 8th Grade Advancement	High School Graduation
<p>Pupil score on state examination*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language arts • Reading • Mathematics • Science • Social Studies • Writing <p>Academic Performance</p> <p>Teacher Recommendations</p> <p>Other Academic Criteria</p>	<p>13 credits</p> <p>Pupil score on high school graduation test**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language arts • Mathematics • Science • Social Studies <p>Academic Performance</p> <p>Teacher Recommendations</p> <p>Board approved activity—each hour, each day</p>
Optional Criteria	
	<p>Additional 8.5 credits encouraged</p> <p>Community service</p>

Three Tasks Facing School Boards

- **Define the criteria—“What do these mean”**
- **Set the level of expectation—“How good is good enough”**
- **Determine how the criteria are brought together—
“How is a decision made”**

Example Criteria Definitions

“What Do These Mean”

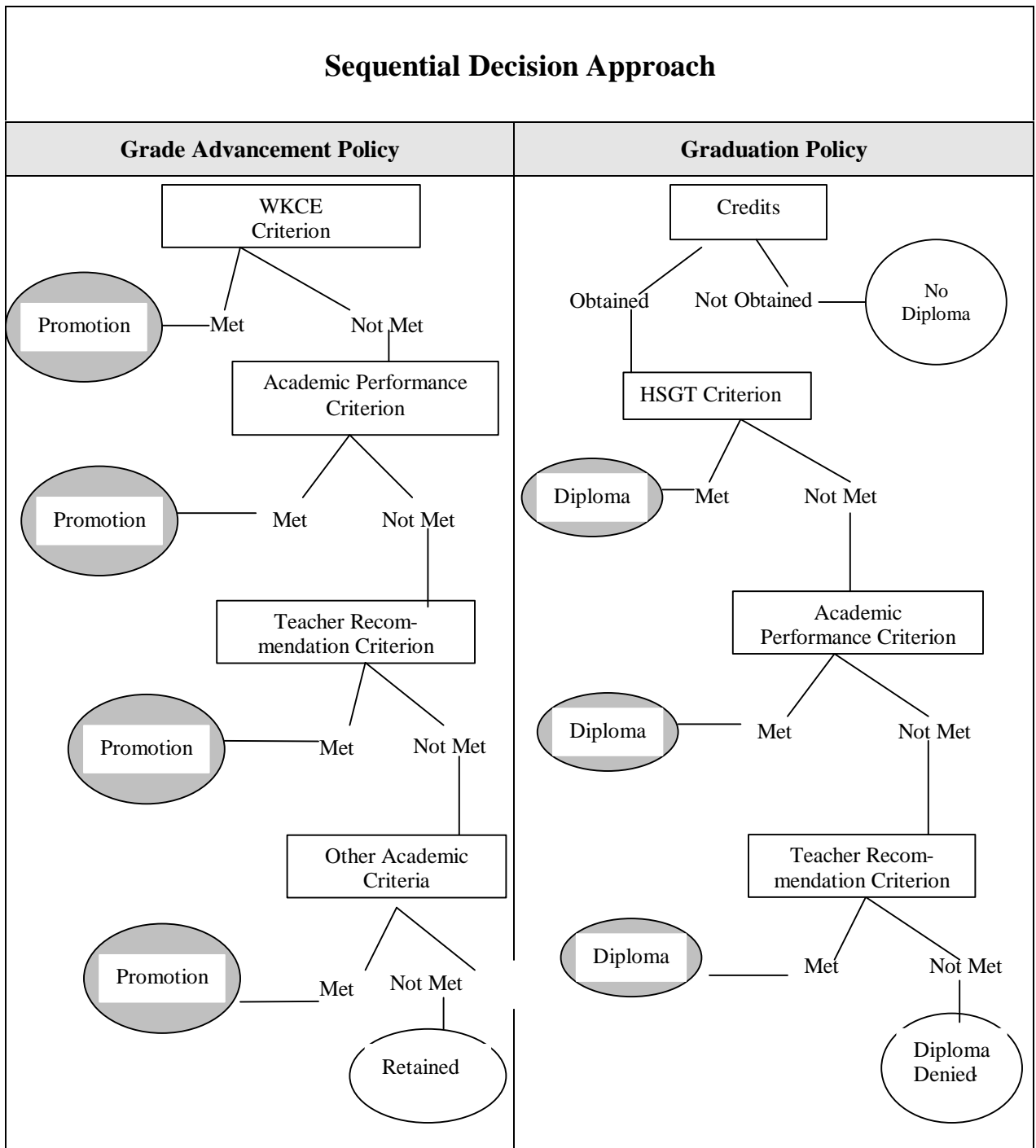
Test Score <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each subtest on 4th Grade WKCE• Each subtest on 8th Grade WKCE• Each subtest on HSGT	Academic Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade Point Average• Report Card Grades• Service Learning• AP Coursework• WRCT Score• Portfolio
Teacher Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checklist• Letter• Receipt of Passing Grade(s)• Mentorship• Faculty Vote• Portfolio	Other Academic Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summer School Attendance• Daily Assignments• After School Tutoring• Portfolio

Example Levels of Expectation “How Good is Good Enough”

Test Score <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive score of basic or above on 3 of 6 subtests• Receive score of meets/exceeds standards on 3 of 4 subtests	Academic Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GPA of 2.0 or higher• 25 hours of service learning activity• Score of 3 or above on 5 point scale for literacy portfolio• Grades of “C” or above on grade level material in 3 of 4 subjects that are part of state assessment
Teacher Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checklist indicates that 70 percent of grade level standards/expectations are met• Letter attests to student’s scholarship, citizenship, career development• 80 percent or more of faculty approve of student’s readiness for next grade level	Other Academic Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of summer school• Score of 3 or above on 5 point scale for literacy portfolio• Prior retention at earlier grade level

Examples of Bringing Criteria Together “How Is a Decision Made”

- **Sequential Decision Approach**
- **Combination Approach**
 - **Compensatory**
 - **Student Selection**
 - **Conjunctive**



Sequential Decision Approach

Notes: In the following examples, the WKCE score criterion is the basis for grade advancement; credit acquisition is a requirement leading to a diploma. In the grade advancement policy example, if a student meets the WKCE criterion, advancement occurs. If a student does not meet the WKCE criterion, the other criteria become the determiners.

In the graduation policy example, if a student meets the district's high school graduation test criterion, graduation occurs. If a student does not meet it, the other criteria then become determiners. In the example, students whose parents opt them out of the high school graduation test, lose the test score as a criterion and the next criterion is reviewed.

Considerations:

- Criteria may be arranged in whatever sequence the district deems appropriate.
- The higher the test score criterion is placed on the "tree," the greater the incentive for taking the test.
- The higher the test score is placed on the "tree," the more data collection and review of other criteria are reduced.
- Sequential Decision Approach limits the number of students for whom all criteria are reviewed.
- A student opted-out of either the WKCE or HSGT by a parent loses that criterion as a decision-making possibility.
- Potential danger exists if HSGT is last on the "tree" in that the test becomes the single determining factor.

<i>Combination Approach—Compensatory Framework</i>	
Grade Advancement Policy	Graduation Policy
<p>18 possible points (example)</p> <p>12 points (example) through any combination of the following required for promotion:</p> <p>Academic Performance 0—6 pts</p> <p>Test Score 0—6 pts (1 point per test)</p> <p>Teacher Recommendation up to 0—6 pts</p> <p>Should a student not acquire 12 points, the other academic criteria are reviewed for decision-making.</p>	<p>12 possible points (example)</p> <p>Credits plus 8 points (example) through any of the following required for graduation:</p> <p>High School Graduation Test 0—4 (1 point per test)</p> <p>Academic Performance 0—4</p> <p>Teacher Recommendation 0—4</p>

Combination Approach—Compensatory Framework

Notes: The compensatory framework allows a student to compensate for poor performance on one criterion by strong performance on another criterion. Each criterion potentially contributes to the grade advancement/graduation decision. Usually, a compensatory framework is built on a point system identifying the total number of points possible, with each criterion carrying an equal number of points. A student must acquire a certain number of points to advance or graduate.

The example provided has a maximum of 18 points possible for advancement and 12 points for graduation. In the example, a student needs to acquire 2/3 of the points possible for advancement/graduation or 12 points for advancement and 8 points for graduation. The points cited are for example purposes only. School districts may establish whatever point system desired.

The compensatory framework usually suggests that a range of points is possible in each criterion thereby creating a need to develop a set of rubrics for each criterion describing what the performance looks like for each of the point values. With this framework, the district needs to determine how total point requirement and accumulation are taken into consideration for those students whose parents opted them out of the test.

Considerations:

- Determining total number of points possible and number of points necessary is a critical aspect.
- Developing descriptions or rubrics for point values requires investment of staff time.
- Structuring point system for students whose parents have opted them out of the test needs to be addressed.
- Framework allows for individual student strengths to surface.
- Framework requires an individual to compute various ways that student could achieve necessary points.

<i>Combination Approach—Student Selection Framework</i>	
Grade Advancement Policy	Graduation Policy
Examples listed after indicators are for illustrative purposes. Districts need to identify indicators reflective of their goals.	
<p>Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Portfolio) Indicator 2 (Grades) Indicator 3 (WRCT Score) Indicator 4 (Service Learning) <p>WKCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Lang.Arts) Indicator 2 (Writing) Indicator 3 (Mathematics) Indicator 4 (Science) Indicator 5 (Soc. Studies) Indicator 6 (Reading) <p>Teacher Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Passing grade) Indicator 2 (Checklist) Indicator 3 (Letter) Indicator 4 (Mentorship) <p>Other Academic Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Summer school) Indicator 2 (After school) Indicator 3 (Readiness) Indicator 4 (Daily Assignment) 	<p>Credit Requirement</p> <p>Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (GPA) Indicator 2 (Com. Serv.) Indicator 3 (AP Coursework) Indicator 4 (Portfolio) <p>HSGT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Meet English Standard) Indicator 2 (Meet math standard) Indicator 3 (Meet science stand.) Indicator 4 (Meet social studies standard) <p>Teacher Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 1 (Letter) Indicator 2 (Mentorship) Indicator 3 (Faculty vote) Indicator 4 (Acceptance of senior project)

Combination Approach—Student Selection Framework

Notes: With the student selection framework, the district identifies a variety of indicators for meeting criteria. The student selects whatever number of indicators is required by board policy. Should the district desire, it not only can set a number of indicators to be attained, but also specify the number of criteria from which those indicators are derived. For example, a district could specify that a student needs to demonstrate success in four indicators to receive a diploma or it could specify that the four indicators must come from at least two criteria.

Considerations:

- Great flexibility for student choice exists.
- Great responsibility rests on student to select, develop, and submit materials.
- District needs to set clear description of process for student to follow.
- Appropriateness of this model for various age groups needs to be discussed.
- District/school record-keeping and review of student work may be substantial.
- Opportunity for use of multiple measures is great.

<i>Combination Approach—Conjunctive Framework</i>	
Grade Advancement Policy	Graduation Policy
<p>Academic Performance Plus WKCE Test Performance as defined by district Plus Teacher Recommendations Obtained Plus Other Academic Criteria</p> <div> <div>Academic Performance</div> <div>+</div> <div>WKCE</div> <div>+</div> </div> <div> <div>Teacher Recommendation</div> <div>+</div> <div>Other Academic Criteria</div> <div>=</div> </div> <p>Promotion</p>	<p>Required credits achieved Plus HSGT Performance as defined by district Plus Academic Performance Definitions Met Plus Teacher Recommendations Obtained</p> <div> <div>Credits</div> <div>+</div> <div>HSGT</div> <div>+</div> </div> <div> <div>Academic Performance</div> <div>+</div> <div>Teacher Recommendation</div> <div>=</div> </div> <p>Diploma</p>

Combination Approach—Conjunctive Framework

Notes: The conjunctive framework requires a student of fulfill each criterion for advancement or graduation to occur. Depending on district definition of the criteria and what performance level is set, the conjunctive framework may be the least forgiving. If a student does not meet any one of the criteria, promotion or graduation is not realized. With this framework, a student opted-out of the test could graduate because other criteria were met, while another student not opted-out is denied advancement or graduation because the test score criterion was not met. Materials and record management may present additional challenges because of the volume of documentation collected for each student.

Considerations:

- Because all students need each criterion, careful consideration needs to be directed to how the work of students whose parents opted them out of the test are reviewed.
- Materials and record management present a unique challenge in that all students are submitting materials in all areas.
- Questions could arise if a student met all criteria except test score.
- This model favors students who are opted-out of the test. Regardless of acceptable level of performance set by district, the students taking the test is disadvantaged in that they need to complete one more criterion.

Grade Advancement and High School Graduation Policy Features

Listed below are some features of various policy approaches discussed in the text. Districts can use this matrix as a way to compare policy approaches. Some features are suggested for consideration. Blank spaces are for features a district may want to add.

	Extensiveness of Record Keeping	Student Involvement Selecting Criteria	Complexity	Latitude for Students Opted Out of Test	Appropriateness for Both Grade Adv. and HSG	Degree to which Multiple Criteria are Required as Part of Decisions			
Sequential Decision									
Combination Compensatory									
Combination Student Selection									
Combination Conjunctive									

District Checklist for Promotion and Graduation Policy Development

Process

Process in place
People identified
Timeline established
Information communicated

Policy Content

Grade Advancement

Pupil score on 4th and 8th grade examination
Level of acceptable performance decided
Number of subtests identified in which student achieves acceptable level

Academic performance
Academic performance defined
Acceptable level of academic performance identified

Teacher recommendations
Who can recommend established
Meaning of recommendation outlined
Form of recommendation identified
Number of recommendations specified

Other academic criteria

Way to bring criteria together decided

High School Graduation

Credit requirements set

Test score on high school graduation test

Number of sub-tests identified in which student meets/exceeds the standards

Academic Performance

Academic performance identified

Acceptable level of academic performance identified

Teacher Recommendations

Who can recommend established

Form of recommendation identified

Number of recommendations specified

Way to bring criteria together decided

Reality check conducted for both grade advancement and high school graduation policies

Legal counsel sought

Procedures

Steps needed to implement promotion and graduation policies identified

People identified

Professional development needs identified

Training occurs

Timeline for implementation set

Monitoring of implementation takes place

Communication vehicles established

Appendix

Comparison of the Prior and Current Statutory Language for 8th, and High School Graduation Tests

December 14, 1999

4th and 8th Grade Prior Law	4th and 8th Grade Current Law	HSGT Prior Law	HSGT Current Law
<i>§118.30(1)(a)</i> : The state superintendent shall adopt or approve examinations designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the 4 th , 8 th , and 10 th grades.	(Unchanged) <i>§118.30(1)(a)</i> . The state superintendent shall adopt or approve examinations designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the 4 th , 8 th , and 10 th grades.	<i>§118.30(1)(b)</i> : ...the department shall develop a high school graduation examination that is designed to measure whether pupils meet the pupil academic standards.	(Unchanged) <i>§118.30(1)(b)</i> . The department shall develop a high school graduation examination that is designed to measure whether pupils meet the pupil academic standard.
<i>§118.30(1m)(a) and (am)</i> ... (t)he school board shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to achieve a score on the examination...that is sufficient for promotion...	<i>§118.30(1m)(a) and (am)</i> (t)he school board shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to ... take the examination...	<i>§118.30(1m)(d)</i> ... the school board shall administer the examination at least twice each school year. The school board shall determine the high school grades in which the examination will be administered each school year.	<i>§118.30(1m)(d)</i> ... The school board shall administer the examination at least twice each school year and may administer the examination only to pupils enrolled in the 11 th and 12 th grades.
<i>§118.30(2)(b)3</i> . Upon the request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the school board shall excuse the pupil from taking [4 th /8 th grade test]...	(Unchanged) <i>§118.30(2)(b)3</i> . Upon the request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the school board shall excuse the pupil from taking [the 4 th /8 th grade test]	<i>§118.30(2)(b)3</i> . Upon the request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the school board shall excuse the pupil from taking [the HSGT]...	(Unchanged) <i>§118.30(2)(b)3</i> . Upon the request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the school board shall excuse the pupil from taking [the HSGT]...
<i>§118.30(5)(a) and (b)</i> Except as provided in par. (c), beginning on July 1, 2002, a school board may not promote a [4 th grade pupil to the 5 th grade or 8 th grade to 9 th grade] unless:	<i>§118.30(5)(a), (b) and (c)</i> were repealed. <i>§118.33(6)(a) 1</i> . Each school board shall adopt a written policy specifying the criteria for promoting a pupil from the 4 th grade to the 5 th grade and from the 8 th grade to the 9 th	<i>§118.33(1)(cm)</i> Except as provided in par. (e), beginning on September 1, 2002, a school board may not grant a high school diploma to any pupil unless the pupil has passed the high school graduation	<i>§118.33(1)(cm)</i> and (e) was repealed. <i>§118.33(1)(f)1</i> . By September 1, 2002, each school board operating high school grades shall develop a written policy specifying

4th and 8th Grade Prior Law	4th and 8th Grade Current Law	HSGT Prior Law	HSGT Current Law
<p>1. ...the pupil's score in each subject area on the [4th/8th grade exam] is at the basic level or above, as determined by the state superintendent. ...</p> <p>(c) Each school board shall develop alternative criteria for evaluating a pupil who did not take the 4th grade or the 8th grade examination that was required for promotion as a result of [parent opt-out, LEP, disability]. A school board may promote a pupil who did not take the examination that was required for promotion ... if the pupil satisfies the alternative criteria.</p>	<p>grade. The criteria shall include the pupil's score on [4th/8th grade] exam... unless the pupil has been excused from taking the examination under §118.30(2)(b) [parent opt-out, LEP, disability]; the recommendations of teachers which shall be based only on the pupil's academic performance; the pupil's academic performance; and any other academic criteria specified by the school board....</p>	<p>examination.... A school board shall provide a pupil with at least 4 opportunities to take the examination in the high school grades. (e) Each school board shall develop alternative criteria for evaluating a pupil who has been excused from the high school graduation test under [parent opt-out] if the pupil satisfies all of the other requirements under this subsection and satisfies the other criteria.</p>	<p>criteria for granting a high school diploma that are in addition to the requirements under par. (a), [credits, etc.] The criteria shall include the pupils score on [HSGT]... the pupil's academic performance; the recommendations of the teachers....</p> <p>§118.30...(e) A pupil's score on the [HSGT] shall be recorded on the pupil's transcript.</p>

Statutory References for High School Graduation Policy Criteria

- *1. Thirteen credits—4 English, 3 social studies, 2 mathematics, 2 science, 1.5 physical education, .5 health [ss. 118.33(1)(a)1 and 2].
- **2. Additional 8.5 credits encouraged [ss. 118.33(1)(am)].
- 3. Enrolled in a class or participated in board-approved activity each class period of each day or enrolled in an alternative education. May grant privilege for students to be off school premises for one period per day if student mature and does not have class [ss. 118.33(1)(b)].
- **4. Community service may be required [ss. 118.33(1)9c)].
- 5. Pupil's score on the examination under ss. 118.30(lg)(d) [ss. 118.33(1)(f)].
- 6. Pupil's academically performance in addition to ss.118.33 (1)(a)[ss. 118.33(1)(f)1].
- 7. Recommendations of teachers [ss. 118.33(1)(f)1].

*Even if a student did not meet 13 credits, a school board may award a diploma if student enrolled in alternative education and school board determines that pupil has demonstrated level of proficiency in subjects listed equivalent to that which pupil would have attained if s/he satisfied requirements.

Alternative education is defined in ss. 115.28(7)(e)1.

**Optional elements.

Grade Advancement And High School Graduation Policy Timeline for Standards and Assessment Initiatives

As Outlined by CESA Standards and Assessment Centers

Year	1 st Semester	2 nd Semester
1999-00	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop "Evidence of Success" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete product and process for "evidence of academic performance." CESA S & A Centers work with networks/task forces to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key issues and questions regarding policy development. Research and collect existing promotion and graduation policies. Identify key elements of a good district policy. Share ongoing status with district administrators. Share answers to questions and issues statewide. Share elements of district policies statewide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public awareness regarding the requirements around new laws pertaining to Grade Advancement and High School Graduation policies.
2000-01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public input and awareness. Draft Grade Advancement and High School Graduation policies at district level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public awareness continues. Board adoption of policies (recommended)*. Professional development with teachers, principals, and all K-12 staff.
2001-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public awareness continues Professional development with teachers, principals, and all K-12 staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public awareness continues. Professional development with teachers, principals, and all K-12 staff.
2002-03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade Advancement and High School Graduation Policies must be adopted by school boards no later than September 1*. Grade advancement policy goes into effect for 4th and 8th graders. 1st HSGT administration with 11th graders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Grade Advancement Policy with first group of 4th and 8th graders
2003-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High School Graduation policy goes into effect with graduating seniors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of High School Graduation policy law is silent on the issue of "adequate or fair notice."

*Although adoption of Grade Advancement and High School Graduation policy is not required until September, 2002, the law is silent on the issue of "adequate or fair notice." "Fair notice" demands that students and parents be advised well in advance of implementation so that expectations are clearly understood by all. The Department of Public Instruction recommends that policy development be completed much earlier than the required date.

Wisconsin Statutes 118.30

118.30 Pupil assessment.

118.30(1)(a)

(a) The state superintendent shall adopt or approve examinations designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the 4th, 8th and 10th grades.

118.30(1)(b)

(b) The department shall develop a high school graduation examination that is designed to measure whether pupils meet the pupil academic standards issued by the governor as executive order no. 326, dated January 13, 1998.

118.30(1g)(a)1.

1. By August 1, 1998, each school board shall adopt pupil academic standards in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography and history. If the governor has issued pupil academic standards as an executive order under s. 14.23, the school board may adopt those standards.

118.30(1g)(a)2.

2. By January 1, 2000, or by January 1 of the 1st school year of operation, whichever is later, each operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) shall adopt pupil academic standards in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography and history. The operator of the charter school may adopt the pupil academic standards issued by the governor as executive order no. 326, dated January 13, 1998.

118.30(1g)(b)

(b) Each school board operating high school grades and each operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) that operates high school grades shall adopt a high school graduation examination that is designed to measure whether pupils meet the pupil academic standards adopted by the school board or operator of the charter school under par. (a). If the school board or operator of the charter school has adopted the pupil academic standards issued as executive order no. 326, dated January 13, 1998, the school board or operator of the charter school may adopt the high school graduation examination developed by the department under sub. (1) (b). If a school board or operator of a charter school develops and adopts its own high school graduation examination, it shall notify the department annually by October 1 that it intends to administer the examination in the following school year.

118.30(1g)(c)

(c) Each school board operating elementary grades and each operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) that operates elementary grades may develop or adopt its own examination designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the 4th grade and may develop or adopt its own examination designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the 8th grade. If the school board or operator of the charter school develops or adopts an examination under this paragraph, it shall notify the department.

118.30(1m)

(1m) Except as otherwise provided in this section, annually each school board shall do all of the following:

118.30(1m)(a)1.

1. Except as provided in sub. (6), administer the 4th grade examination adopted or approved by the state superintendent under sub. (1) to all pupils enrolled in the school district, including pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district, in the 4th grade. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the school board has not developed and adopted its own 4th grade examination, the school board shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1m)(a)2.

2. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the school board has developed or adopted its own 4th grade examination, administer that examination to all pupils enrolled in the school district, including pupils enrolled in charter

schools located in the school district, in the 4th grade. The school board shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1m)(am)1.

1. Except as provided in sub. (6), administer the 8th grade examination adopted or approved by the state superintendent under sub. (1) to all pupils enrolled in the school district, including pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district, in the 8th grade. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the school board has not developed and adopted its own 8th grade examination, the school board shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1m)(am)2.

2. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the school board has developed or adopted its own 8th grade examination, administer that examination to all pupils enrolled in the school district, including pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district, in the 8th grade. The school board shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1m)(b)

(b) Administer the 10th grade examination to all pupils enrolled in the school district, including pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district, in the 10th grade.

118.30(1m)(d)

(d) If the school board operates high school grades, beginning in the 2002-03 school year administer the high school graduation examination adopted by the school board under sub. (1g) (b) to all pupils enrolled in the school district, including pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district, in the 11th and 12th grades. The school board shall administer the examination at least twice each school year and may administer the examination only to pupils enrolled in the 11th and 12th grades.

118.30(1r)

(1r) Annually each operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) shall do all of the following:

118.30(1r)(a)1.

1. Except as provided in sub. (6), administer the 4th grade examination adopted or approved by the state superintendent under sub. (1) (a) to all pupils enrolled in the charter school in the 4th grade. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the operator of the charter school has not developed or adopted its own 4th grade examination, the operator of the charter school shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1r)(a)2.

2. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the operator of the charter school has developed or adopted its own 4th grade examination, administer that examination to all pupils enrolled in the charter school in the 4th grade. The operator of the charter school shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1r)(am)1.

1. Except as provided in sub. (6), administer the 8th grade examination adopted or approved by the state superintendent under sub. (1) (a) to all pupils enrolled in the charter school in the 8th grade. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the operator of the charter school has not developed and adopted its own 8th grade examination, the operator of the charter school shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1r)(am)2.

2. Beginning on July 1, 2002, if the operator of the charter school has developed or adopted its own 8th grade examination, administer that examination to all pupils enrolled in the charter school in the 8th grade. The operator of the charter school shall provide a pupil with at least 2 opportunities to take the examination administered under this subdivision.

118.30(1r)(b)

(b) Administer the 10th grade examination to all pupils enrolled in the charter school in the 10th grade.

118.30(1r)(d)

(d) If the charter school operates high school grades, beginning in the 2002-03 school year, administer the high school graduation examination adopted by the operator of the charter school under sub. (1g) (b) to all pupils enrolled in the 11th and 12th grades in the charter school. The operator of the charter school shall administer the examination at least twice each school year and may administer the examination only to pupils enrolled in the 11th and 12th grades.

118.30(2)(a)

(a) To the extent possible, all examinations under this section shall be free of bias.

118.30(2)(b)1.

1. If a pupil is enrolled in a special education program under subch. V of ch. 115, the school board or operator of the charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) shall comply with s. 115.77 (1m) (bg).

118.30(2)(b)2.

2. According to criteria established by the state superintendent by rule, the school board or operator of the charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) may determine not to administer an examination under this section to a limited-English proficient pupil, as defined under s. 115.955 (7), may permit the pupil to be examined in his or her native language or may modify the format and administration of an examination for such pupils.

118.30—ANNOT.

NOTE: Subd. 2. is shown as affected by two acts of the 1999 legislature and as merged by the revisor under s. 13.93 (2) (c).

118.30(2)(b)3.

3. Upon the request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the school board shall excuse the pupil from taking an examination administered under sub. (1m).

118.30(2)(b)4.

4. Upon the request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) shall excuse the pupil from taking an examination administered under sub. (1r).

118.30(2)(c)

(c) The results of examinations administered under this section to pupils enrolled in public schools, including charter schools, may not be used to evaluate teacher performance, to discharge, suspend or formally discipline a teacher or as the reason for the nonrenewal of a teacher's contract.

118.30(2)(d)

(d) The results of examinations under this section may not be used in determining general or categorical aids to school districts.

118.30(2)(e)

(e) A pupil's score on the examination administered under sub. (1m) (d) or (1r) (d) shall be recorded on the pupil's transcript.

118.30(3)

(3) The state superintendent shall make available upon request, within 90 days after the date of administration, any examination required to be administered under this section. This subsection does not apply while the examination is being developed or validated.

118.30(4)

(4) The department shall study the utility of administering technology-based performance assessments to pupils.

118.30(6)

(6) A school board and an operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) is not required to administer the 4th and 8th grade examinations adopted or approved by the state superintendent under sub. (1) if the school board or the operator of the charter school administers its own 4th and 8th grade examinations, the school board or operator of the charter school provides the state superintendent with statistical correlations of those examinations with the examinations adopted or approved by the state superintendent under sub. (1), and the federal department of education approves.

118.30—ANNOT.

History: 1991 a. 269; 1993 a. 16, 367; 1995 a. 27 ss. 3971b to 3971yd, 9145 (1); 1997 a. 27, 164, 237; 1999 a. 9, 19 s. 13.93 (2) (c)

118.33 High school graduation standards; criteria for promotion.

118.33(1)(a)

(a) Except as provided in par. (d), a school board may not grant a high school diploma to any pupil unless the pupil has earned:

118.33(1)(a)1.

1. In the high school grades, at least 4 credits of English including writing composition, 3 credits of social studies including state and local government, 2 credits of mathematics, 2 credits of science and 1.5 credits of physical education.

118.33(1)(a)2.

2. In grades 7 to 12, at least 0.5 credit of health education.

118.33(1)(am)

(am) The state superintendent shall encourage school boards to require an additional 8.5 credits selected from any combination of vocational education, foreign languages, fine arts and other courses.

118.33(1)(b)

(b) A school board may not grant a high school diploma to any pupil unless, during the high school grades, the pupil has been enrolled in a class or has participated in an activity approved by the school board during each class period of each school day, or the pupil has been enrolled in an alternative education program, as defined in s. 115.28

(7) (e) 1. Nothing in this paragraph prohibits a school board from establishing a program that allows a pupil enrolled in the high school grades who has demonstrated a high level of maturity and personal responsibility to leave the school premises for up to one class period each day if the pupil does not have a class scheduled during that class period.

118.33(1)(c)

(c) A school board may require a pupil to participate in community service activities in order to receive a high school diploma.

118.33(1)(d)

(d) A school board may grant a high school diploma to a pupil who has not satisfied the requirements under par. (a) if all of the following apply:

118.33(1)(d)1.

1. The pupil was enrolled in an alternative education program, as defined in s. 115.28 (7) (e) 1.

118.33(1)(d)2.

2. The school board determines that the pupil has demonstrated a level of proficiency in the subjects listed in par. (a) equivalent to that which he or she would have attained if he or she had satisfied the requirements under par. (a).

118.33(1)(f)1.

1. By September 1, 2002, each school board operating high school grades shall develop a written policy specifying criteria for granting a high school diploma that are in addition to the requirements under par. (a). The criteria shall include the pupil's score on the examination administered under s. 118.30 (1g) (d) [s. 118.30 (1m) (d)], the pupil's academic performance, the recommendations of teachers. Except as provided in subd. 2., the criteria apply to pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district.

118.33—ANNOT.

NOTE: The bracketed language indicates the correct cross-reference. Corrective legislation is pending.

118.33(1)(f)2.

2. By September 1, 2002, each operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) that operates high school grades shall develop a policy specifying criteria for granting a high school diploma. The criteria shall include the pupil's score on the examination administered under s. 118.30 (1r) (d), the pupil's academic performance, the recommendations of teachers.

118.33(1)(f)3.

3. Beginning September 1, 2003, neither a school board nor an operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) may grant a high school diploma to any pupil unless the pupil has satisfied the criteria specified in the school board's or charter school's policy under subd. 1. or 2.

118.33(2)

(2) The state superintendent shall:

118.33(2)(c)

(c) Establish course requirements under sub. (1) (a) and approve any school board's high school graduation standards policy that is equivalent to the requirements under sub. (1).

118.33(2)(m)

(m) Adopt policies to accommodate pupils with exceptional educational interests, needs or requirements, not limited to children with disabilities, as defined under s. 115.76 (5).

118.33(3)

(3) By September 1, 1986, each school board operating high school grades shall submit to the state superintendent a report describing the school board's policies and guidelines on high school graduation standards, including a list of courses required under sub. (1) (a) and the number of hours in each school term required to earn one credit under sub. (1) (a), and thereafter shall notify the state superintendent whenever changes are made in such policies or guidelines. The department shall make reasonable efforts to combine the reports required under this subsection with other required school board reports.

118.33(3m)

(3m) A course taken at a technical college by a child attending the school part-time or in lieu of high school under s. 118.15 (1) (b), or attending the school under s. 118.15 (1) (cm), does not fulfill any of the high school graduation requirements under sub. (1) (a) unless the state superintendent has approved the course for that purpose. If a pupil satisfies all of the high school graduation requirements under sub. (1), the school board shall grant a high school diploma to the pupil regardless of whether the pupil satisfied all or a portion of the requirements while attending an institution of higher education under s. 118.55 or a technical college.

118.33(4)(a)

(a) The state superintendent shall establish procedures for school boards to certify to the state superintendent whether they are in compliance with the requirements under sub. (1) and the rules promulgated under sub. (2).

118.33(4)(b)

(b) The state superintendent may periodically review school district high school graduation standards and shall notify any school board not in compliance with the requirements under sub. (1) or the rules promulgated under sub. (2), identifying the changes necessary.

118.33(5)

(5) The department shall include in its biennial report under s. 15.04 (1) (d) information on the status of statewide high school graduation standards.

118.33(6)(a)1.

1. Each school board shall adopt a written policy specifying the criteria for promoting a pupil from the 4th grade to the 5th grade and from the 8th grade to the 9th grade. The criteria shall include the pupil's score on the examination administered under s. 118.30 (1m) (a) or (am), unless the pupil has been excused from taking the examination under s. 118.30 (2) (b); the pupil's academic performance; the recommendations of teachers, which shall be based solely on the pupil's academic performance; and any other academic criteria specified by the school board. Except as provided in par. (b) 1., the criteria apply to pupils enrolled in charter schools located in the school district.

118.33(6)(a)2.

2. Except as provided in par. (b) 2., beginning on September 1, 2002, a school board may not promote a 4th grade pupil enrolled in the school district, including a pupil enrolled in a charter school located in the school district, to the 5th grade, and may not promote an 8th grade pupil enrolled in the school district, including a pupil enrolled in a charter school located in the school district, to the 9th grade, unless the pupil satisfies the criteria for promotion specified in the school board's policy adopted under subd. 1.

118.33(6)(b)1.

1. Each operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) shall adopt a written policy specifying the criteria for promoting a pupil from the 4th grade to the 5th grade and from the 8th grade to the 9th grade. The criteria shall include the pupil's score on the examination administered under s. 118.30 (1r) (a) or (am), unless the pupil has been excused from taking the examination under s. 118.30 (2) (b); the pupil's academic performance; the recommendations of teachers, which shall be based solely on the pupil's academic performance; and any other academic criteria specified by the operator of the charter school.

118.33(6)(b)2.

2. Beginning on September 1, 2002, an operator of a charter school under s. 118.40 (2r) may not promote a 4th grade pupil to the 5th grade, and may not promote an 8th grade pupil to the 9th grade, unless the pupil satisfies the criteria for promotion specified in the charter school operator's policy under subd. 1.

118.33—ANNOT.

History: 1983 a. 411; 1985 a. 29; 1991 a. 39, 269; 1993 a. 223, 339, 340, 399, 491; 1995 a. 27 s. 9145 (1); 1997 a. 27, 113, 164; 1999 a. 9.

118.33—ANNOT.

NOTE: 1983 Wisconsin Act 411, which created this section, has "Legislative declaration" in section 1.

118.33—ANNOT.

NOTE: 1993 Wis. Act 339, which created sub. (1) (d), contains explanatory notes.